Modernisation and expansion of Gopalpur minor port, Orissa

1536. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether MMTC proposes to take up the upgradation and expansion of Gopalpur minor port in Orissa;

(b) whether MMTC has made any agreement with his Ministry to develop that minor part as a major port;

(c) what steps are being taken to develop that port as a major port; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b) No such proposal has been received by this Ministry.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

New Postal Services Policy

1537. SHRI VIRENDRA KATARIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering any new postal services policy to achieve greater customer satisfaction; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI SUKH RAM): (a) and (b) The Department of Post has consistent followed the policy of providing postal services in the country comprising efficient service to the customers across the counter as also expeditious mail processing and delivery. While counter services are provided through a steady expansion of the network of post offices, improvement in mail processing and delivery is effected through rationalisation of procedures, adoption of suitably speedy transport system, induction of technology and better management.

Continuing this basic policy, new initiatives have now been taken to achieve greater customer satisfaction through more efficient, error-free and responsive counter service through use of computer based multi-purpose counter machines, better ergonomics and improved work environment. This programme is also aimed at enhancing employee satisfaction by providing a clean and friendly work environment and enabling the department to provide new value-added services to meet the future expectations of the customers. In the area of expeditious mail processing and delivery, the programme of modernisation is aimed at providing exclusive channels for processing and delivery of large volumes of pin-coded first class mail between the National Capital and other metro cities and State Capitals of the country. Such segmented processing of mail is expected to decongest the system and allow it to function smoothly to the benefit of different types of users of Postal services.

The Department has also initiated schemes to provide value-added services based on satellite connectivity. Transmission of Money Orders using satellite and the introduction of Hybride Mail Service are two such schemes. Twenty-six micro earth stations capable of transmitting and receiving satellite signals have already been set up in the country and 49 more centres are targetted to be completed by the end of the current year.

Availability of Environment Funds

1538. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that insurance companies are sitting on the Environment Funds in absence of any guidelines on its implementation;

(b) if so, what is the reaction of Government to the press report in Financial Express dated 21.7.95 under the caption "Environment Fund" stagnating in absence of guideliness;

(c) the details regarding facts on the observations made in the report; and

(d) the action taken so far/proposed to sort out the issues to ensure availability of funds for development purposes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Presently, the General Insurance Corporation and its subsidiaries are maintaining the Environment Relief Fund in separate bank

accounts in short term deposits for 46 days in accordance with the instructions provided by this Ministry. Detailed guidelines are under finalisation and shall be published in the scheme for establishing and maintaining the Environment Relief Fund.

(b) and (c) The news report has highlighted the following issues:

(i) stagnation of Rs. 25 crores of Environment Relief Fund with insurance companies in absence of guidelines;

(ii) absence of instructions for investing the fund; and

(iii) non-compliance by Public Sector Units.

Regarding issues (i) & (ii) according to the available statistics, so far the contribution forwards ERF is Rs. 18 crore. The money is being reinvested regularly in short-term deposits and has earned a sum of Rs. 2.11 crores as interest. Detailed modalities to reinvest the fund have been incorporated in the scheme, under preparation, for establishment of ERF.

(iiv) So far, except for one case, none of the Public Sector Units have sought exemption under the Act. A few Public Sector Units have already taken out an insurance policy. Necessary instructions to the State Governments, who have been delegated with powers to give appropriate directions, have been issued to ensure compliance by Public Sector Units.

(d) The use of the Environment Relief Fund is restricted for meeting any claims beyond the liability of the insurer under the Public Liability Insurance Act, and cannot be diverted to development purposes.

Catering/Vending etc. Stalls at Railway Stations

1539. SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the contractors holding the catering/vending, book stalls, miscellaneous Article Stalls and fresh juice stalls in Northern Railway (Station and division-wise);

(b) the dates of allotment and execution of the agreements in each case as mentioned in part (a) above;

(c) the details with names of the contractors whose period of agreement expired and not renewed within the stipulated period in each division of Northern Railway; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C.K. JAFFER SHARIEF): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Fruit Plants on forest land

1540. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government envisage the idea of growing fruit-plants on the forest land which is not only helpful in fruit production but also eco-friendly;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether such forest land would be given on lease, if required?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) to (c) The principal aim of the national Forest Policy 1988 is to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance through afforestation. Accordingly, such suitable fruit trees as would fit in with the overall scheme of afforestation may be planted on forest lands. It is not, however, proposed to lease forest lands for horticultural purposes.

Projects under implementation in Paradip Port

1541. SHRI SANATAN BISI: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what are the important Projects under implementation in Paradip Port (Orissa); and

(b) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b) The